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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5224
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BANGKOK 003501

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EEB: MLurie, JSpeck; USAID for WHammink; USDA for KMiller

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD (Thailand)

Ref: State 123480

¶1. Summary: ESTHoff discussed Reftel discussion points with Ministries of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs on November 25. The Royal Thai Government (RTG) is interested in the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security (GPAF) but would need to see the non-paper and agreed principles mentioned in Reftel before committing to the partnership. Thailand is a net food exporter and a donor to the East Asian Rice Reserve system. The RTG has its own interagency Food Security Council. Given Thai interest in food security, Post believes that Thailand would become a partner once more details of the GPAF are made available. End Summary.

¶2. ESTHoff delivered Reftel discussion points and background on the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security (GPAF) on November 25 to officials in the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC): Suvanee Vacharakiat, Director of Agricultural Policy and Vannapha Yongchareon, Director for Food Security. ESTHoff also delivered the demarche to Kanchana Patarochoke, Director of the North America Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Director Vacharakiat confirmed that she and her subordinate Vannapha Yongchareon are the points of contact for the GPAF.

¶3. The MOAC officials had reviewed the faxed discussion points and background with interest. Director Vacharakiat said that the Royal Thai Government (RTG) was interested in the partnership. She asked for the non-paper referenced in the discussion points and said that she would need to see more details before the RTG could commit to being a member. She mentioned that the EU had approached the RTG several months ago with a similar idea for a global partnership. Vacharakiat asked for the framework principles in order for the RTG to make an informed decision about the partnership. She said that the general idea of a multi-stakeholder partnership was a good one. The Minister of Agriculture was due to return to Bangkok on November 26 or 27, and Vacharakiat said that after discussion she would brief ESTHoff on the Minister's response.

¶4. Vacharakiat noted that Thailand is a net food exporter and has been interested in food security for years. The RTG is a donor to the East Asian Rice Reserve System in which the ASEAN + 3 nations are involved. In addition, the RTG has its own Food Security Council that meets regularly to discuss domestic and international issues; the Council includes representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture and Public Health as well as private food producers. She noted that Food Security would be a topic at the ASEAN summit in December. The Director opined that Thailand would be inclined to participate in any global food security effort.

¶5. Points of contact: Hal Howard ESTH officer, howardhh@state.gov; Gary Meyer, Agricultural Counselor, gary.meyer@fas.usda.gov. Ms. Suvanee Vacharakiat, Director of Agricultural Policy, Thai MOAC, suwanee@oae.go.th.

¶6. COMMENT: The RTG is clearly active in international food security issues. Post requests the non-paper referenced in Reftel and any other materials that would help the RTG to commit to partnership. The large turnout of MOAC officials for our November 25 meeting was a positive indicator of the RTG's interest in the GPAF.

